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MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES.

Baltimore, November, 1891.

CHAUCER AND "THE MOTHER OF GOD."

"THE Mother of God" is not to be found in the list of poems rejected by the Chaucer Society in 1869, and it was not until the year 1880 that the poem was formally declared spurious. In the introduction to his (third) edition of 'The Prioresses Tale, etc.,' published in the latter year, Prof. SKEAT includes the poem among CHAUCER's authentic works, and says of it: "Translated from the Latin; attributed to Chaucer in 1490 (*sic*); apparently genuine." This last expression was doubtless written before the Chaucer Society rejected the poem, for Prof. SKEAT, in his edition of the 'Minor Poems' (1888), declares "The Mother of God" to be the work of OCCLEVE. All critics now agree that OCCLEVE, and not CHAUCER, was the author; but the fact that Mr. STOPFORD BROOKE, in his admirable little 'Primer of English Literature' (1887), has still retained the poem as CHAUCER's, though seven years had elapsed since its rejection, makes the discussion of its spuriousness an interesting one. Several notes have been written on the subject by critics, but no one has as yet gathered together the facts that show clearly that the poem is Occlevian and not Chaucerian. In *Anglia* (iii, 183; iv, 101 (*Anz.*); vi, 104), Dr. JOHN KOCH has given several short but valuable notes on the authorship of "The Mother of God," though most of them are hardly more than suggestions.

The poem, which consists of twenty seven-line stanzas, was first published by Dr. JOHN LEYDEN (1775-1811) in his edition of 'The Complaynt of Scotland,' Edinburgh, 1801, and it is included in his Preliminary Dissertation to that work, pp. 87-92. LEYDEN's copy is from the Edinburgh MS., and this manuscript contains a system of Theology, composed by JOHN DE IRLANDIA, a noted theologian, who flourished during the last half of the fifteenth century, and who wrote this system in 1490. His references to CHAUCER are interesting:

"I knaw yt Gower, Chauceir, the monk of

berry (Lydgate), and mony wther, has written in Inglis tong richt wisly, induceand personis to lefe vice and folow vertuis." And again: "And sene I haue spokin samekle of this noble and holy virgin, I will, on ye end of yis buk, write one orisoune yat Galfryde Chauceir maid, and prayit to yis lady; and yat I be not eloquent in yis tounge as was yat noble poet, I will writ her twa orisounes in Lattin, etc."

JOHN DE IRLANDIA very likely had the Selden MS. from which to make a copy, and hence his ascription of the poem to CHAUCER is of very doubtful authority.

"The Mother of God" is found in three manuscripts:

1. MS. Phillipps 8151—library of the late Sir THOMAS PHILLIPPS, Cheltenham. There are sixteen other poems in this MS., all by OCCLEVE. A catalogue of these poems was given by GEORGE MASON in the Introduction to his edition of some of 'Occleve's Poems,' 1796; but "The Mother of God" is *not* printed in this volume, nor is this MS. copy "the only known copy" of the poem in existence. Prof. SKEAT makes these two erroneous statements in the 'Minor Poems,' p. viii.

2. Arch. Selden B. 24 (about 1460-70; Prof. SKEAT says, "Apparently written in 1472")—Bodleian Library.

3. MS. 18. 2. 8 (about 1490)—Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

As far as I can learn, "The Mother of God" was not printed in any edition of CHAUCER before that of BELL (1856). Dr. MORRIS's (*Al-dine*, 1866) text seems based on the Selden MS. copy, which, he says, is "more accurate" than the copy published in *Notes and Queries* from the Edinburgh MS. In quality, these two copies seem about equal, but the Phillipps MS. is superior to both. This latter statement receives its confirmation in the fact that as Dr. MORRIS's text contains many faulty lines, we are compelled to have recourse in almost every instance to the Phillipps copy in order to correct them and to reduce them to regularity. We now come to the real question before us.

First, let us examine the evidence against Chaucerian authorship:

1. *The manuscripts.* The best and the oldest of the three (the Phillipps) does not name

CHAUCER as the author of the poem. The Selden is the only MS. of the three that contains any other piece by CHAUCER; but its scribe was very reckless in his colophons. He attributes "The Complaint of the Black Knight," which is obviously by LYDGATE, to CHAUCER by a misleading colophon. In like manner, this learned scribe put at the end of several other poems, "Quod Chaucere," which poems are "plainly not Chaucer's at all." In the same way, "The Mother of God" is marked, evidently without any authority whatever for such marking, "Explicit Oracio Galfridi Chaucere." The Edinburgh MS. has the same colophon at the end; but not content with this, the scribe puts at the beginning, "Incipit Oratio Galfridi Chaucere." And these colophons are the only things that connect the poem with CHAUCER.

The Edinburgh MS. and the Selden MS. are evidently closely related. The first varies from the Phillipps in five hundred and fourteen cases, and from the Selden in three hundred and five cases. But the variants, in both instances, are very different. In the first instance, Edinburgh *vs.* Phillipps, many clauses, phrases, and even whole sentences are entirely different, not to speak of the different words employed in the same place in each. But in the second instance, Edinburgh *vs.* Selden, nearly all of the variants are those of the different spellings of the same word in each. As the Edinburgh MS. is about twenty years later than the Selden, and as both are Scottish, it is possibly an indirect copy of the Selden; and hence, while copying the substance of the poem, the scribe did not fail to add the colophon at the end, and also to put one at the beginning by way of a flourish.

2. *The faulty rime of the poem.* At l. 64 occurs the rime of *honour* (vb.): *curë* (n.). This can be corrected by reading, according to the Phillipps MS., *honurë*, thus making the word an inflected infinitive. If this be objected to, the rime must be taken either as a license or as a fault. CHAUCER admitted such a rime in his "Complaint of Venus"—*aventure: honoure* (l. 22). But it must be remembered that this poem is a translation, and that CHAUCER was very much restricted in its rimes; for he says, l. 79 f.:

"And eek to me hit is a greet penaunce,
Sith rym in English hath swich scarsitee,
To folowe word by word the curiositee
Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce."

3. The contents of the "A. B. C." and "The Mother of God" are so much alike that it is hard to believe CHAUCER would have written or translated two poems on the same subject (KOCH). Both are orisons to the Virgin, and both are made up principally of despairing ejaculations for help from the power and wiles of the Evil One. Both are filled with the same extravagant ascriptions of "honor and virtue and goodness and love" to the mother of Christ, and in both the forms of address are very similar.

The conclusion to be drawn from these three arguments is this: The only thing that ascribes the poem to CHAUCER is a mere colophon at the end of a MS. copy, the scribe of which is noted for his ascription to CHAUCER of poems for which he could find no author. CHAUCER was then the most distinguished English poet, and why was it not only too easy to put off on him much of the anonymous work of the period after his death?

Second, let us notice the arguments for Occleavian authorship:

1. *The manuscript evidence.* As this was the strongest argument against Chaucerian authorship, so it is the strongest for Occleavian authorship. As has been said, "The Mother of God" is preserved in the Phillipps MS. together with sixteen short poems, all of which sixteen poems are undoubtedly the work of Occleve. Again, this poem is No. ix in the collection, has the title of "Ad beatam Virginem," and commences with the words, "Modir of God;" while No. vi, in the same collection, has the same title and commences "Modir of lyf." The question, therefore, naturally suggests itself: How is it possible that a poem of CHAUCER should thus have crept right into a mass of OCCLEVE's poetry?

2. *The faulty rime.* This can be easily explained by OCCLEVE's rimes. In his "Ballad to Sir John Oldcastle," *honure* (inf.) rimes with words in *-ure*, as *endure* (stanza 28); while *honour* (sb.) rightly rimes with words in *-our*, as *sour*, *errour*, *fauour* (stanza 37) (KOCH).

3. The manner and spirit of "The Mother of God" strongly resemble the manner and spirit of OCCLEVE's poems. OCCLEVE owes nothing to external nature: there is not a breath of spring in any of his poetry. He is entirely subjective, having passed most of his time in making poems, whose only subjects are the errors of a misspent life, addresses to princes and patrons, and exclamations of distress to the Holy Virgin. In the last category, "The Mother of God" may be classed. Its whole tone reminds a reader of the despairing, the miserable, the pitiful tone of much of OCCLEVE's poetry.

Dr. FURNIVALL says somewhat enigmatically: "No one can suppose that poor Hoccleve had the power of writing his Master's 'Mother of God;'" and Prof. SKEAT adds: "After all, it is only a translation; still, it is well and carefully written, and the imitation of Chaucer's style is good." My own belief is, that OCCLEVE, burdened with debt, tainted by the morals of a licentious court, without the wide sympathy and the sunny genius of CHAUCER, and devoted to a life of indolence and debauchery, gave vent at some time or other to his miserable feelings in these lines addressed to "The Mother of God."

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A NEW EXEGESIS OF PURGATORIO

xix, 51.

PURGATORIO XIX, 51 is one of the most variously interpreted of the intrinsically less important passages of the 'Divina Commedia,' nor can any of the numerous explanations heretofore offered be regarded as satisfactory.

The context of the passage is as follows. While seeking their way from the fourth to the fifth circle of Purgatory VIRGIL and DANTE are confronted by an angel, who exclaims to them: "Venite, qui si varca."

Mosse le penne poi e ventillonne,
Qui lugent affermando esser beati,
 Ch'avran di consolar l'anime DONNE.

He moved his pinions afterwards and fanned us,
 Affirming those *qui lugent* to be blessed,
 For they shall have their souls with comfort filled.
 (LONGFELLOW'S Translation.)

The allusion is to St. Matthew v, 5, *Beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur*, the latter clause of which is evidently paraphrased by DANTE in the words

Ch'avran di consolar l'anime donne.

The difficulty consists in explaining the use and meaning of the last word, *donne*.

SCARTAZZINI, in the commentary to his edition of the 'Divina Commedia,' has classified the various attempted interpretations of the passage in question, and it will be to the point to quote from his annotations some of the more striking glosses there recorded (ed., vol. ii, pp. 344, 345):

DONNE: qui il *Vellut*. traduce Dante nell' inintelligibile, scrivendo: "cioè, De l'anime gentili, che di tal vizio si purgavano." Alcuni, sa Iddio secondo qual etimologia, prendono *donne* (*done*?) nel senso di *dono*, e spiegano: "avranno dono di consolare le anime loro"; *Lan.*, *Ott.*, *Buti*. Il *Castelvetro* poi (nelle sue *Giunte alle Prose del Bembo*) vuole che *donne* sia qui posto per *donde*, per modo che il senso sarebbe: "Avranno di che consolare le anime." Ma da quando in quà, e secondo qual grammatica si può dire: *Aver donde di consolare*? Il *Dan.* ed il *Vent.* spiegano: *signore di sè medesime, perchè saranno libere*; ma in allora cosa ha mai che fare quel *di consolar*? I più prendono *donne* nel significato proprio di questo termine=*signore, padrone*, e spiegano: Le anime loro saranno signore da potersi consolare; o: essi avranno l'anime posseditrici di consolazione; così *An. Fior.*, *Benw. Ramb.*, *Lamb.*, *Torel.*, *Pogg.*, *Biog.*, *Costa*, *Ces.*, *Borg.*, *Wagn.*, *Tom.*, *Br. B.*, *Frat.*, *Greg.*, *Brun.*, *Andr.*, *Triss.*, *Ben-nass.*, *Frauc.*, *Perez*, *Blanc*, ecc., ecc., e noi dobbiamo confessare di non saper proporre interpretazione migliore, sebbene anche questa non ci voglia andar troppo a grado.

I believe that the true exegesis of this verse consists in explaining the word *donne* as the abridged past participle of the verb *donare*, according to which the rendering would be: "For they shall have their souls *gifted, endowed* with consolation." The formation and use of so-called "abridged participles" in the first conjugation is so general in Italian, that though I am not able to cite a single other occurrence of the abridged participle of *donato* (the coincidence of form with the noun *dono* in the masculine singular would operate to prevent its use), there seems to be no reason to deny its occurrence here, where the sense is